GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:218
ANSWERED ON:07.08.2000
UNICEF REPORT ON POLIO
M.V.V.S MURTHI;SHIVAJI MANE

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the Report UNICEF`s global publicationProgress of Nations (PON) 200(launched in New Delhi recently;

(b) if so, whether as per report India holds the highest number of polio cases, HIV/AIDS cases, and malnourished children in the world;

(c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(d) the suggestions/recommendations made in the report; and

(e) the action likely to be taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR)

(a)to(e) A statement is laid on the table of the Lok Sabha.

STATEMENT REFEERED TO IN REPLY TO STARRED LOK SABHA QUESTION NO 218 TO BE ANSWERED ON 7.8.00

Government is aware of the UNICEF publication - Progress of Nations-2000 which is a global publication and does not make country specific recommendations. The ` publication has made observations and general recommendations on a wide range of health related subjects including Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), malnutrition in children, the role of antenatal care in improving child health and survival, provision of appropriate primary health care to children with specific reference to control of acute respiratory infection, immunization services including global efforts for eradication of poliomyelitis, and water and sanitation. The report, inter-alia, also the highlights concerns about child labour, the problems faced by orphans, female genital mutilation and prevalence of smoking among younger age groups. Concern is expressed about decline in donor aid for health programmes.

India is the second most populous country in the world and it accommodates one-sixth of humanity. There are several countries with higher prevalence of under weight children than India; although India has the largest number of malnourished(underweight) children . Because of the sheer size of its population, the absolute quantum of disease burden in the country is very high. According to the report `Progress of Nations-2000`, India accounts for the largest number of polio cases and the second largest number of HIV/AIDS infected people in the world.

India has always been one of the large polio reservoirs in the world. Since 1995, however, the country`s efforts to eradicate polio through the Pulse Polio Programme and to review the development of a highly effective and countrywide polio surveillance system have drawn international acclaim. During 1998 India was responsible for 68% of the global incidence of Polio. During 1999, as has been noted in the `Progress of Nations-2000` reported cases had declined by approximately 40%. In fact, polio transmission is now virtually confined to the two large States of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. During the current year (2000-2001), Government is determined to launch a final attack on polio through National and sub-national Immunisation Days and mop up vaccination programme, wherever required.

In order to prevent and control the spread of HIV/AIDS in India a comprehensive Programme is under implementation throughout the country. The main components of the Programme include reduction of spread of HIV in high risk groups by identification of target populations who are provided with services like counseling, condom promotion and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. The general public is being educated about preventive measures through intensive an awareness campaign. Provision has been made for voluntary testing and counseling, safe blood transfusion services and prevention of occupational exposure. Financial assistance is provided for home and community based care to people living with HIV/AIDS. Collaboration between public, private and voluntary sector for AIDS control activities is being promoted.

To reduce the prevalence of malnutrition in children the Government of India have adopted the National Nutrition Policy in 1993. The Policy advocates a multi-sectoral approach for controlling the problem of malnutrition and improving nutrition of the people. The National Nutrition Policy contains short-term direct interventions as well as long term indirect interventions. A National Plan of Action on Nutrition has been developed to serve as a framework for translating the instruments of the National Nutrition Policy. The roles of 14 Departments and Ministries have been identified for nutrition promotion.

Various measures adopted by the Government to improve the nutritional status of the population including the child population, inter-alia, include increase in agricultural production; improvement of purchasing power of the people through income generation schemes; making available essential food items at subsidised costs through the public distribution system; nutrition education for increasing awareness and effecting behaviour change in feeding practices, including exclusive breastfeeding and appropriate complementary feeding practices in infants and young children. Supplementary feeding programmes including the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, Special Nutrition Programme, Balwadi Nutrition Programme and Mid-day Meal Programme are under implementation.

A programme for prevention of specific micronutrient deficiency of iodine, and prophylaxis programmes for preventing blindness due to Vitamin A deficiency and nutritional anaemia due to deficiency of iron and folic acid are being implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. These drugs (Vitamin A and Iron Folic Acid tablets) are being supplied at the sub-centre and anganwari levels. A pilot project for control of micronutrient malnutrition is also under implementation.

The Government accords the highest importance to improving the standards of primary health care service for the people, especially the weaker segments of the population and the under-served regions of the country.